

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

November 24, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, and Leader McCarthy:

As our nation prepares its public health infrastructure for distribution and administration of safe and effective vaccines against Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), we write to urge Senate and House leadership to include our *Health Force and Resilience Force* Proposal in any upcoming coronavirus-related legislative package. Our plan, which integrates the *Jobs to Fight COVID-19 Act* by Senator Schatz and the *Coronavirus Containment Corps Act* by Senator Warren, would address the dual health and economic toll of the coronavirus crisis by investing in locally-recruited, community-based health workforces. The *Health Force and Resilience Force* Proposal would respond to immediate pandemic-related health challenges, such as the safe and effective administering of vaccines and continued contact tracing, testing, and quarantine/isolation supports. It would also address the alarming racial and ethnic health disparities exacerbated by the pandemic, including equitable vaccine distribution. State, Local, and Tribal public health departments need resources and coordination in order to save lives, end the pandemic, its broader social and economic consequences, and get back to life.

Every community in America is unique, and so too is each community's challenge for equitable vaccine distribution and safe, effective administration. Our *Health Force and Resilience Force* Proposal would provide state, local and tribal local governments with flexible funding to create hundreds of thousands of jobs to prepare for vaccine distribution and administration. A successful national COVID-19 vaccination campaign will depend on robust public health infrastructure capable of keeping up with the unprecedented progress of COVID-19 vaccine development. In order to be prepared for the safe, timely distribution of vaccines, Congress must provide state and local governments with significant resources to build a community-based workforce capable of tackling the many facets of this pandemic and all future health challenges. Additionally a surge in a resilience workforce under the Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA) would be able to assist with supply chain logistics and emergency procurement of medical supplies, personal protective equipment (PPE), testing support, support testing and contact tracing activities, on top of the Agency's more traditional disaster preparedness and response functions.

Public health experts and elected leaders, including the National Governors Association, have concerns that a federal vaccine distribution plan, without adequate preparation, could fail to reach [poor and minority communities](#). A comprehensive approach to equitable vaccine distribution must include communities most impacted by historical harms at the earliest planning stages, and it must be engaged immediately to ensure uptake of vaccines and mitigate against exacerbating inequities. Our *Health Force and Resilience Force Proposal* would spur the creation of trusted community-based public health workforces similar to community health workers (CHWs), promotores, and/or peer health promoters. This locally-recruited Health Force and Resilience Force would mitigate the effects some communities have with distrust of medical and government institutions. That distrust, along with broad anti-vaccine sentiment and disinformation, require a large-scale investment in local recruiting and community engagement, which could be led in part by the Health Force and Resilience Force. Our proposal would afford local health departments the resources for planning, community mobilization, vaccine delivery, and individual and community follow up, with a focus on the most marginalized communities throughout.

The workforce built through our *Health Force and Resilience Force Proposal* would respond to public health and social emergencies as well as long-term public health needs across diverse communities to keep our economy open, productive, and successful. We will face future pandemics and other major health threats that harm our economy and livelihood. If we do not learn from our experiences with the coronavirus pandemic we will find ourselves closing down again as we scramble to respond to the next great national health threat.

Our *Health Force and Resilience Force Proposal* would make our economy resilient and prepared to withstand national challenges like an infectious disease, a biological weapon, or future unknown health threats. We strongly urge you to pass this legislation in any upcoming legislative package.


Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator


_____/s/_____
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator




Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator




Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

_____/s/_____
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress

_____/s/_____
Lauren Underwood
Member of Congress